is correct, the G-4 is trying to persuade the AU not to press for the Veto membership now on the Resolution. But, if the Veto is to be given up for the present, will it be suspended for 10 years or 15 years? And, will the P-5 accept the position, in principle, that the Veto to be given, but not to be made effective now?

SHRI K. NATWAR SINGH: Sir, in the meeting that took place in Addis Ababa, the Africans demanded that if there is to be any reform or expansion in the Security Council, then, the African representatives, in the expanded Security Council, must have the Veto. On this, the Conference broke up. Now, what has happened is, the AU has appointed a group of 10 countries, two from each area, north, south, east, west and central Africa, at the state level, to discuss this issue and get back to the G-4 and other countries which have put in their Resolutions before the Security Council so that an agreement can be reached. The fact of the matter is that the position taken up by our African brothers in Addis Ababa, in our judgement, with great respect, is erroneous, because, as the Secretary General has said, "New permanent members, asking for a Veto, just forget it. It is a non-starter". We are in touch with all of them. We have sent special representatives all over the world. We have got re-assurance. Everybody agrees that there should be an expansion. It is all about how this has to be achieved. And, this achievement is what we are trying to get as many people, as many countries, as possible for agreeing to an expansion so that we can have 128 votes.

Indian Astronaut in US Space Shuttle

*343. SHRI S.P.M. SYED KHAN: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether the USA is examining to include an Indian astronaut in their training programme who would board the US-manned space vehicle, Space Shuttle;

(b) if so, the details thereof and status of the proposal; and

(c) the details of the Indo-US initiatives on Space programmes in the recent years?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE (SHRI PRITHVIRAJ CHAVAN): (a) to (c) A statement is laid on the Table of the House.

Statement

(a) No such proposal has been received.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) The details of Indo-US activities on space cooperation since 2004 are as follows:

(i) The India-United States Conference on Space Science, Applications & Commerce was organised at Bangalore during June 21-25, 2004 wherein the space agencies, government representatives, academia and aerospace industries of both the countries explored the possibilities of cooperation.

(ii) A Joint Working Group on Civil Space Cooperation has been formed to monitor and coordinate joint cooperation programmes. This group held its first meeting at Bangalore on June 29-30, 2005.

(iii) Against an announcement of opportunity by ISRO for participation of international science community in the Indian unmanned mission to moon, 'Chandrayaan-1', two payloads-(1) Mini SAR payload from Applied Physics Laboratory of John Hopkins University and (2) Moon Mineralogical Mapper payload from Jet Propulsion Laboratory, NASA-have been shortlisted for participation out of over 30 requests from international science community.

(iv) A US proposal for setting up of ground station in India for reception of US satellite, National Polar-Orbiting Operational Environmental Satellite System (NPOESS), and sharing of data and joint research has been received.

SHRI S.P.M. SYED KHAN: Sir, I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether it is true that the Deputy Chief of the U.S. Mission in India, Mr. Robert Blake, had made a statement in Chennai last month that the United States planned to put an Indian astronaut in space shortly.

SHRI PRITHVIRAJ CHAVAN: Sir, as I have said in the reply, there is no formal offer from the U.S. Government to put an astronaut in space.

SHRI S.P.M. SYED KHAN: Sir, my second supplementary is this. I would also like to know from the hon. Minister about the advantages that we would get from the U.S. participation in the unmanned mission to the moon.

SHRI PRITHVIRAJ CHAVAN: Sir, as the House knows, India is planning its first scientific mission to moon, 'Chandrayaan-I', which will be launched in 2007-08. It is not a manned mission; it is a scientific mission for exploring and expanding scientific knowledge about the moon and upgrading India's technological capabilities.

As part of this mission, we have offered to the global community to carry some scientific experiments on this mission along with the five main experiments that India will have. Among various offers that have been received—we received almost 30 offers from International entities, and universities—two offers are from the United States, which are being seriously considered. If that proposal goes through, we will take free on board two of the US experiments.

NH project running behind schedule

*344. SHRI VEDPRAKASH P. GOYAL: Will the Minister of SHIPPING, ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that a number of on-going national highway projects are running behind the scheduled time;

(b) the details of such projects and the reasons for delay, project-wise;

(c) to what extent the construction cost of each such project has been increased due to delay;

(d) the details thereof; and

(e) in what manner Government propose to meet the deadlines?

THE MINISTER OF SHIPPING, ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS (SHRI T.R. BAALU): (a) to (e) A statement is laid on the Table of the House.

Statement

(a) and (b) There are 447 projects on National Highways which are running behind schedule. Details of projects with the reasons for delay are annexed. [*See* Appendix 205 Annexure No. 99]

(c) and (d) The increase in cost of construction of projects is due to various reasons such as change in scope of work, increase in quantities, delay in land acquisition and utility shifting, escalation, time overrun etc.